

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-04

RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01 SPC-03 DRC-01 AID-20 /074 W

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R 231026Z NOV 73

FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1863

INFO AMCONSUL IBADAN

AMCONSUL KADUNA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SPOP, PINS, PINT, NI

SUBJECT: NIGERIA CALM BEFORE CENSUS

REF: LAGOS A-223

1. AFTER REACHING PEAK IN PAST FEW WEEKS, CENSUS
CAMPAIGN ENDS SUNDAY WITH START ACTUAL COUNT.

DESPITE RECENT PUBLIC AND PRIVATE CRITICISM OF
LOGISTICAL AND OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE ASPECTS OF
CONDUCT OF CENSUS (INCLUDING SOME FEAR THAT ONE
WEEK WILL PROVE INADEQUATE FOR FULL COUNT), PUBLIC

MOOD IN NIGERIA APPEARS CALM AND HOPEFUL. INTER-
REGIONAL SUSPICIONS OF CHEATING, WHILE CERTAINLY
ALIVE, HAVE LARGELY DROPPED BELOW SURFACE; AND,
IN LINE WITH "DEFENSIVE" ATTITUDE REPORTED IN
REFAIRGRAM, TRIBAL AND ETHNIC GROUPS HAVE ADOPTED
"WAIT AND SEE" OUTLOOK TOWARD HONESTY OF OTHERS.

2. COMMENT: FMG HAS DONE REASONABLY GOOD JOB IN
CENSUS PREPARATIONS, AND WE CONTINUE OPTIMISTIC
FINAL FIGURES WILL BE ACCURATE WITHIN ACCEPTABLE
LIMITS. (FYI: FINAL CENSUS RESULTS NOT ANTICIPATED
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FOR TWO TO THREE YEARS THOUGH SOME PRELIMINARY

FIGURES MAY BE AVAILABLE AS EARLY AS THIS JANUARY.)
EACH REGION, HOWEVER, HAS PRECONCEIVED IDEA WHAT
"ACCURATE" FIGURES SHOULD BE AND IS LIKELY TO
REJECT RESULTS THAT VARY GREATLY FROM EXPECTATIONS.
EAST, ESPECIALLY IN ABSENCE MAJOR COMPLAINTS BY
OTHER REGIONS, WOULD PROBABLY GO ALONG WITH
ANY FIGURES THAT DO NOT PLACE EASTERNERS AT
OVERWHELMING DISADVANTAGE. REAL THREAT REJECTION
RESULTS COMES FROM NORTH AND WEST. "ACCURATE"
FIGURES, TO NORTH, SHOULD MIRROR 1963 CENSUS IN
WHICH NORTHERNERS COMPOSED MAJORITY NIGERIANS.
WESTERNERS LARGELY FOR THIS REASON, REJECTED
RESULTS 1963 CENSUS AND WOULD BE UNLIKELY ACCEPT
SAME RESULTS NOW. THEREFORE, FMG MAY BE FACED
WITH INSOLUBLE DILEMMA THAT ANY FIGURES (EVEN
IF ACCURATE) ACCEPTABLE TO NORTH WOULD BE
REJECTED BY WEST, AND VICE-VERSA.
REINHARDT

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